

## “Direct Action”

### The Tactics of Radical Activism: Part I

*How Environmental Groups Use Violent Tactics to Advance Their Agenda*

By Neil Hrab

*Summary: Radical groups like the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Rainforest Action Network and the Ruckus Society are tax-exempt nonprofits that hold fundraisers and accept foundation grants. They also destroy property, disobey police orders, justify violence—and get away with it.*

**J**uly 8, 2000 – Kwajalein Atoll, U.S. Marshall Islands – American scientists stationed on this tiny Pacific island are making last minute preparations before testing a prototype missile defense system. Two hours before the test, a security camera picks up a small skiff speeding towards the test site, a restricted area. The skiff lands. Two people get out, raise a banner reading “Stop Star Wars, Greenpeace,” and begin hurrying towards the test site. Quick-thinking staff scientists jump into a golf cart and chase down the intruders, who are arrested.

**February 6, 2002 – Paris, France**—a French court decides to uphold a 90 day jail sentence for a militant anti-American French farmer named Jose Bove. Bove participated in a burst of anti-American vandalism in 1999. During that episode, saboteurs wrecked a construction site in a small French town called Millau. The site was to be the location of a McDonald’s. The court dismissed Bove’s argument that the destruction of the McDonald’s was “legal and necessary” to protect French agricultural interests against competition with US farmers.

**June 22, 2003 – Sacramento, CA** – Thousands of protestors stream into



The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, founded by Paul Watson, has sunk 10 commercial ships in the name of protecting whales.

California’s capital city to protest a biotechnology summit. A group of 12 demonstrators break away from the main crowd and enter a community garden. They lock themselves together using an intricate series of steel pipes. Anti-biotech activists complain that when police arrive later in the day to break up this unorthodox protest and saw the pipes apart, they use far more force than is necessary and hurt the demonstrators.

Most Americans understand that they live in a free republic that provides democratic means to achieve political ends. They agree with the radio talk show host who tells his listeners, “If you want a revolu-

tion, go to the ballot box.” However, important fringe elements in the environmental and animals rights movements disagree.

**February 2004**

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# OrganizationTrends

They scoff at rational discussion and democratic procedures because they have neither patience nor respect for the opinions of others—character traits necessary to inform, lobby, and build successful political coalitions. Instead, they prefer—indeed, relish—opportunities for “direct action.” Direct action is the name activists give to carefully arranged high-profile confrontations such as the three listed above. The activists have two goals in mind: to get publicity for their cause, and to intimidate their enemies.

To be clear, direct action is not deliberate physical violence against other human beings. Nor is it the advocacy of killing or injuring others. Indeed, radicals often talk long and loudly about their peaceful intentions, and blame violence and injuries on authorities attempting to enforce law and order. But in recent years, as the pace of direct action has increased, so has the violence. Violence was generated by the chaotic, massive anti-globalization protests in Seattle and Washington, D.C. The direct action practices used at these and other demonstrations have become

little more than a slick rationalization for rioting.

Radical environmentalists, anti-war and animal rights activists destroy property and provoke violent confrontations—in the name of non-violence. Moreover, they are legally incorporated nonprofits under U.S. tax law. There’s the rub. Occasionally a group is prosecuted for specific illegal acts (e.g. Greenpeace, for instance, paid a large fine to the federal government for disrupting U.S. missile tests). But seldom are they threatened with loss of their nonprofit tax status unless an outside party undertakes a difficult and costly challenge.

This article, the first of two parts, profiles the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, the Rainforest Action Network, and the Ruckus Society. These 501(c)(3) nonprofit groups provoke confrontations that blur the difference between violence and legitimate dissent.

## Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS), a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit registered with the IRS and based in Friday Harbor, Washington, reported \$1.014 million in revenue and \$4 million in assets in 2001. The Society’s IRS form proclaims its mission to “educate the public concerning conservation of marine mammals [sic] and marine habitats using newsletters and public speaking.” The Society also carries out “conservation research and investigation into illegal whaling,” as well as “conservation and protection of marine mammals [sic].”

Most of the organization’s income appears to come from individual donations. However, at least two foundations have supported Sea Shepherd. The Sausalito, California-based Foundation for Deep Ecology—\$46,500 (2001)—believes that “technology worship” causes much of the world’s ills. The Ithaca, New York-based Park Foundation—\$40,000 (2000)—has \$600 million in assets and is endowed by North Carolina media entrepreneur Roy Park. Sea Shepherd also lists business “sponsors” like Patagonia, the outdoor gear producer, and Paul Mitchell hair styl-

ing products. Its celebrity supporters include actors Richard Dean Anderson (“McGyver”), a member of its board of trustees, and Martin Sheen (“The West Wing”). They help host fundraising events like a \$60 per person “high tea” held last month at a home in La Jolla, California.

Sea Shepherd’s founder is Canadian Paul Watson, 53, a former sailor who helped found Greenpeace in 1971. But he quit Greenpeace, claiming it was not radical enough, and started Sea Shepherd in 1977. He has denounced his old Greenpeace comrades as the “Avon ladies of the environmental movement.”

In 2002, James Jarboe, the FBI’s Domestic Terrorism Section Chief, described the Sea Shepherd Society’s role in popularizing the violent tactics of direct action, which are increasingly used by greens and animal rights activists. Testifying before Congress, Jarboe traced the origin of direct action to the decision “by disaffected members of the ecological preservation group Greenpeace” to “form the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.” (Jarboe’s testimony is available at <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress02/jarboe021202.htm>)

Sea Shepherd’s extremism is well known. The Society’s fleet of boats (known as “Neptune’s Navy”) has sunk ten commercial ships and rammed countless others, mainly to stop their crews from hunting whales. SSCS also takes credit for cutting the nets of fishing boats. Luckily, so far, no one has been injured in its attacks.

In 1986, Sea Shepherd sank two Icelandic whaling vessels in Reykjavik harbor. Two Sea Shepherd activists (Watson was not present) opened the vessels’ engine room valves one night and by morning both ships were at the bottom of the harbor. The activists also caused \$2 million in damage to a whale meat factory.

“How can anyone call me a terrorist?” Watson protested. “Terrorism means causing injuries to innocent people. There were no injuries at Reykjavik. We’ve never injured anyone... We saved the lives of 200 whales by sinking those ships. To call me a terrorist means you are placing private

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property above the sanctity of life.” Watson later challenged Iceland authorities to arrest him. But after being questioned for seven hours, he was released because “there was not found to be sufficient cause to lay a specific charge.”

The Society’s website (<http://www.seashepherd.org>) reports on its activities and identifies its “fleet” vessels. One named the *Farley Mowat* honors the Canadian author known for his nationalism and hostility towards the U.S. military. Another, the *Sirenian*, is a refurbished U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat. The website reports “Sea Shepherd’s current fleet also includes various smaller craft including inflatables, kayaks, and personal watercraft.”

Watson once justified Sea Shepherd to the Canadian magazine *Maclean’s* this way: “The average human being couldn’t give a damn about the Earth and the other 35 million species that inhabit it with us...We are here to piss people off, not to win a popularity contest.” In December 2003, he told a San Diego reporter, “We look at ourselves as good pirates going after bad pirates.”

Watson claims the 1982 United Nations World Charter for Nature gives Sea Shepherd legal cover for its activities. Clause 21 of the Charter reads:

*States and, to the extent they are able, other public authorities, international organizations, individuals, groups and corporations shall:*

*(a) Co-operate in the task of conserving nature through common activities and other relevant actions, including information exchange and consultations;*

*(e) Safeguard and conserve nature in areas beyond national jurisdiction (i.e. on the high seas).*

Watson has said his ultimate ambition is to use Neptune’s Navy to build “an aggressive international oceanic policing force that is answerable to no particular government.”

Of course, few support Watson’s assertion that the U.N. Charter gives SSCS a right to commit violent acts in international waters. Moreover, “soft” agreements like the Charter for Nature are part of the legal universe of RUDs (resolutions, understandings or declarations) that U.N. bodies produce each year by the score. They have no enforceable legal effect.

Christopher Horner, an expert on international law at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, says, “It is romantic to many anarchists and other anti-development types to imagine themselves as premature Road Warriors, self-deputized enforcers on a mission to elevate feel-good language to the level of real, live ‘international law.’ But even were this ‘Charter for Nature’ a true legal instrument—a claim belied at the outset by its title—one cannot permissibly read into it the sanctioning of otherwise illegal activity, in this case high sea piracy, as a response to perceived violations, particularly by private parties.” No doubt, the Sea Shepherd Society hopes more private “civil society” NGOs emulate its tactics, invoking international law to “enforce” international treaties.

Watson has a glib explanation for his high-seas escapades. “I maintain MartinLutherKing’s understanding of violence,” he told ABCNews.com not long ago: “You can’t commit an act of violence against a non-sentient thing.” He told the magazine *Geographical* in 2002: “We [the Sea Shepherd Society] do not protest. Protesting is fundamentally submissive. We are enforcers.”

## Watson and the Sierra Club

Watson styles himself an outsider, but he’s hardly a pariah. In 2003, 25,683 members of the Sierra Club voted him onto its 15-member board of directors in a national popular election. An announcement in *Sierra* magazine merely identifies his occupation as “wildlife conservationist.”

Top Sierra Club leaders like executive director Carl Pope have no illusions about Watson and have warned that eco-terror groups hurt the environmental cause. Not

surprisingly, these warnings don’t sit well with Watson. In March 2003, during the run-up to the April election, Watson accused Pope of trying to “influence the membership” to hurt his election chances. A group of Sierra Club dissidents subsequently released a Watson letter to Pope (available at <http://www.susps.org/candidates/watson.html>):

*“What I want to bring to the Sierra Club’s Board is ...this experience that has put this fire in my belly, and this impatience with fools in my attitude. I want the Sierra Club to use its muscle to aggressively fight for what is left. I am fed up with organizations becoming comfortably ensconced in the business of raising funds, publishing glossy books, and milking public concern, and delivering little in return. The world is in deep trouble Carl...and quite frankly your positive, everything is wonderful, lets not rock the boat attitude, is not the solution we need right now.”*

In December 2003, Watson boasted to the *San Diego Union-Tribune* that he was only three votes shy of controlling a majority of the Sierra Club board -- and its nearly \$100 million budget.

## Rainforest Action Network

The San Francisco-based Rainforest Action Network (RAN) practices a land-bound version of direct action. Like Sea Shepherd, RAN is also a 501(c)(3) public charity whose contributions are tax-deductible. In 2002, it reported revenue of \$2,243,078, expenses of \$2,132,810 and assets of \$1,229,520. Founded in 1985, RAN has about 30,000 members who paid \$307,837 in dues in 2002.

RAN claims the world’s forests for its territory. It regularly trains activists to organize “direct action”-style anti-logging protests. Training exercises include climbing up trees and hanging makeshift shelters from them in order to stage tree sit-in protests. “The climbing is important on two levels,” a RAN spokeswoman told the *Financial Times*. “It helps get activists in touch with their own power. But it is also very practical. It trains people for tree sits and banner hangs.”

Besides training anti-logging activists, RAN has been a prominent player in the massive anti-capitalist, anti-globalization protests staged against meetings of international finance and trade officials. During the 1999 “battle of Seattle” RAN activists clambered up a construction crane to hang a banner denouncing the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting. RAN spokesmen also proved expert at promoting media “spin,” rebuffing suggestions that protestors were at fault when the demonstrations turned violent.

RAN’s tactics have not hurt its good standing among philanthropies. Its major foundation donors include the Ford Foundation—\$290,000 (2002), the Rockefeller Brothers Fund—\$200,000 (2000) and the Turner Foundation—\$80,000 (2000). Other foundation donors are the Compton Foundation—\$25,000 (2001), Dorot Foundation—\$25,000 (2000), Educational Foun-

... protests. The workshops included theoretical and philosophical discussions on the history of ... protests and the workings of the WTO. There were also practical sessions on how to climb buildings for ‘banner-drops,’ conduct surveillance, calm angry protesters, deal with nervous police and deliver meaningful sound bites.”

RAN executive director Kelly Quirke made no bones about the objective—to raise hell: “People are outraged. They know they are basically enslaved.” While Quirke didn’t say who was doing the enslaving, he knew the response: “Our job is to find a way to trigger that outrage.”

After three days of rioting that left an estimated \$20 million in property losses, Quirke provided this email spin on events: “We had, in Seattle, a real-life glimpse of what corporate-controlled reality looks like. Police in the streets, no civil rights, martial

for trying to uphold civil liberties, democracy, environmental, labor, and human rights.” He called the riots “an eye-opener” for “industry barons... more potent than an early-morning Bloody Mary at the golf course.” Hayes later attended the 2003 WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico—as a discussion panelist.

Incredibly, RAN denies that its members contributed to the anarchic mob that wreaked havoc. “The police were not distinguishing between the rabble-rousers and us,” said RAN’s Shannon Wright. “Almost all of us were just here expressing our democratic rights of free speech, and soon we were caught up in all of this.”

Talk like that gives the Rainforest Action Network useful legal cover. However, in 2001, Frontiers of Freedom, a free market policy group founded and chaired by former U.S. Senator Malcolm Wallop, called its bluff and filed a formal complaint against RAN with the IRS. It is urging the agency to strip RAN of its tax-exempt status, citing its close self-identification with lawlessness. The challenge is still pending.

### Recent RAN Direct Action Activities

Rainforest Action Network activists can justify direct action because they don’t believe the U.S. is a democracy. In a 2000 interview with the left-wing *Tikkun* magazine, Randy Hayes asserted: “We aren’t that close to democracy politically in the United States. We are actually more like a ‘democracy theme park.’”

**Washington, D.C.:** Seattle was only the beginning, the opening round in a long-term struggle by anti-globalization forces to save democracy from corporate authoritarianism. At the April 2000 meeting of the World Bank and IMF in Washington, D.C. RAN helped foment direct action at a training camp the *Washington Post* dubbed “A Rebellion Without a Cause.”

Police eventually arrested 1,300 people whose attempts to provoke them were copied out of the Seattle playbook. On

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“How can anyone call me a terrorist? Terrorism means causing injuries to innocent people. There were no injuries at Reykjavik. We’ve never injured anyone...We saved the lives of 200 whales by sinking those ships. To call me a terrorist means you are placing private property above the sanctity of life.” -- Paul Watson, President, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

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dation of America—\$80,000 (2001), Foundation for Deep Ecology—\$15,000 (2001), Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund—\$250,000 (2000), Roy A. Hunt Foundation—\$12,000 (2001), Forest C. Lattner Foundation—\$20,000 (2000), Wallace Global Fund—\$40,000 (2001), and Wilburforce Foundation—\$50,000 (2000).

### Seattle

In preparing for the Nov. 29-Dec. 3, 1999 Seattle confrontation with the World Trade Organization, RAN co-sponsored a direct action training camp. A *Seattle Times* reporter observing the camp noted the sophistication of its “curriculum”: “The camp was designed to teach skills for mass

law, jail brutality - we saw that what we jump-started the week with: an action warning about the loss of democracy - is not just activist rhetoric, not just some advertisement, but real. We saw, all week long, as did the rest of the world, what they will do to get their way.”

RAN is proud of its role creating chaos. “We seriously embarrassed the powers that be in Seattle,” Patrick Reinsborough ~~told the~~ *Seattle Times*. “The important thing is we’ve already won...This is history in the making.” Randy Hayes, founder of the Rainforest Action Network, said the anarchy in Seattle made the WTO “synonymous with repression of ordinary citizens

April 16, 10,000 protestors shut down Washington's downtown. A reporter watched as "one group of demonstrators, some holding sections of chain link fence...charged toward motorcycle police and an anti-riot squad. "Police also confiscated bottles of urine and at least one plastic bottle with a rag inside (a potential Molotov cocktail?), as well as pop bottles with the tops or bottoms sawed off. Odd chants and slogans—"Keep your genes out of our beans" (against genetic modification), "Life before debts" (third world debt forgiveness), "Down with capitalist racist death penalty," "We are all the seeds of change," and "In all your decadence people die"—marked the the protesters' anarchism.

But RAN spokesman Reinsborough treated rioting as only one among many different forms of direct action: "Disrupting a meeting is just one tactic," he said. "The intention is to shut down the institutions themselves, and that work will continue." The D.C. unrest cost taxpayers \$5 million in police overtime and \$1 million for body armor and other riot protection equipment.

**New York City:** RAN activists created a huge traffic jam and inconvenienced thousands of people in midtown Manhattan in February 2003 when they scaled a YMCA building to unfurl a banner criticizing Citigroup, the financial services company, for atrocities against the environment. Police arrested five RAN-affiliated activists on charges of reckless endangerment. But New Yorkers were unimpressed. One complained that RAN members could climb the "rocks in Central Park if they want to play...The human fly routine doesn't work in midtown at midday."

**San Francisco:** RAN joined Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, the Earth Island Institute, the Ruckus Society and other radical groups at the "Environmentalists Against the War Eco-rally" in San Francisco in January 2003. Activists voiced rage over "U.S. plans for a preemptive attack on Iraq" and hysterically denounced "the tactical use of nuclear weapons," something never publicly contemplated by U.S. military planners.

**Johannesburg:** In September 2002, anti-Americans around the world gathered in South Africa for the U.N. World Summit on Sustainable Development. RAN activist Mike Brune helped organize the disruption of a summit speech by Secretary of State Colin Powell. But when demonstrators unveiled an anti-Bush banner, Powell refused to take the bait. Said an observer, "Instead of the expected arrest, he just motioned angrily for [them] to sit down." Brune was heard shouting "I am proud to be an American but I am ashamed of my government."

**Washington, D.C.:** After watching RAN participate in an April 2002 "Palestinian Solidarity March," humorist P.J. O'Rourke wrote that the protest "had almost all the elements of a classic modern American political demonstration," but "the only thing missing was an intelligible demand." O'Rourke described RAN's contribution to the protest: a "fifteen-foot-wide balloon...decorated like a globe with

violent direct action towards greater effectiveness in environmental protection." Ruckus calls itself a "strategic and tactical clearing house," and opposes "the pathological corporate culture that rules" North America. Trainees are taught how to barricade a street, spy on police radio traffic, and speak to the media. It's boot camp for radicals. Not surprisingly, other radical organizations like the Rainforest Action Network turn to Ruckus to train their activists.

Ruckus was founded in 1995 by Mike Roselle, an alumnus of Greenpeace, Earth First! and RAN, and Howard Cannon, another old Greenpeace hand. Like Sea Shepherd, it makes a big point of defining a "distinction" between "violence and destruction of property." Ruckus executive director John Sellers told *Mother Jones* magazine: "Violence to me is against living things. But inanimate objects? I think you can be destructive, you can use vandalism strategically. It may be violence under the

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"We need to talk to people and organize them for peace, not disrupt their lives and make them angry. Delivery guys and commuters are not our enemy...I'm sure a lot of the people who are disrupting things in the city [a reference to anti-war protests in nearby San Francisco] are well-meaning...But it plays like they are a bunch of narcissistic, washed-out leftists."

David Harris, anti-war activist on tactics of Ruckus Society

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a FOR SALE banner across it, but it was shaped like a small-town water tower or, maybe, a mushroom cloud."

### Ruckus Society

The well-named Ruckus Society, located in Oakland California, reports revenues of \$479,000 and assets of \$133,361. Ruckus gets some foundation support: \$10,000 from the Foundation for Deep Ecology (2000). Its stated mission is to provide training "for hundreds of students in the philosophy and use of non-

law, but I just don't think it's violence."

Interviewed by *New Left Review* in 2001, Sellers explained the evolution of direct action tactics. He recounted that he joined Ruckus hoping to "take the technological sophistication of Greenpeace actions, and spread it around." Sellers, a former chief of Greenpeace's Washington D.C. office, was referring to the amazing training regime Greenpeace has developed for its elite cadre. "My idea was to dumb this down technologically, so it would be

cheaper, and then popularize it.”

## Seattle

Ruckus's role in the anti-WTO riots in Seattle was major but little-noted at the time. How had a mass of 50,000 violence-prone protestors caught local police by surprise?

A *Chicago Tribune* report noted that before the start of the protests, “Two leaders from the Ruckus Society...met with Seattle police officials in a Chinatown restaurant and worked out a deal: Several hundred protesters would breach WTO security under the close watch of the police. They would get arrested, and make their symbolic statement. The police agreed to the plan. It sounded simple: protest by photo opportunity.” Subsequent law enforcement efforts to restore order after police found themselves overwhelmed by the protesters, the *Tribune* noted, “infuriated the peaceful demonstrators.”

“The police response to civil disobedience was brutality,” charged Sellers. “We had discussions with them and they were not supposed to use physical force unless there was a life-threatening situation.”

## The GOP Philadelphia Convention

Philadelphia police were taking no chances when the Republican National Convention met in their city (July 31 - August 3, 2000). They arrested more than 400 rioters, and one was John Sellers whose bail was set at \$1 million (later reduced to \$100,000). According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sellers faced charges of “obstruction of justice, obstructing a highway, failure to disperse, recklessly endangering another person, and conspiracy.” (Charges were dropped in November.)

The radicals who planned the riots (they were never identified and prosecuted) clearly intended to cause damage – and inflict casualties. Police seized piano wire meant to string across streets to trip police horses, gasoline-soaked rags, and improvised slingshots. Even the ACLU was appalled. Said ACLU executive director Larry Frankel, “We believe that vandaliz-

ing property, turning over trash cans, assaulting persons and shutting down the city by blocking traffic are not activities protected by the First Amendment.”

Democratic Mayor John Street complained bitterly about Ruckus and defended the city's decision to make arrests. Said Street, “We think it would be terrible public policy for us to have people come, joining in what appears to us to be a very well thought out, well-planned conspiracy to shut down the city of Philadelphia and disrupt the convention that was here, and at the end of the day we say all is forgiven, go back where you came from. That will not be the case.”

Police Commissioner John Timoney was explicit. “There's a cadre, if you will, of criminal conspirators who are about the business of planning conspiracies to go in and cause mayhem and cause property damage and cause violence in major cities in America that have large conventions or large numbers of people coming in for one reason or another.”

Still, Ruckus insisted that its activities were peaceful and non-violent in essence. “We'll have to [continue] to be radically nonviolent and radically confrontational at the same time...It's going to be a chess match out in the streets,” said Sellers.

## California and Florida

Last year Ruckus trained anti-globalization radicals for an international Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology held in Sacramento, California. Anticipating trouble, the federal government spent \$3 million on conference planning and another \$1 million on security for the representatives of 120 nations at the June event. One thousand police officers patrolled the conference venue, as did officials from the Department of Justice, the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the California National Guard.

Protestors did their best to provoke police arrests by spitting on officers, shouting anti-cop obscenities and upending municipal trash containers. But only 70

people were arrested—five for blocking traffic by lying down in an intersection and others for ignoring orders to disperse. Thirty protestors trespassed onto the campus of the University of California at Davis, where two suspended themselves midair in a stairwell and began chanting “Corporate greed is destroying our trees!” They too were arrested.

Sacramento Assistant Sheriff Michael Smith acknowledged the sophisticated Ruckus-style organizing behind the apparent disorder of the protests. “They're just testing us out,” he told Knight Ridder. “We think they are trying to get a reaction, to see how things work, where the backups come from, where the jail facility is.”

Ruckus organizers were also a presence in Miami, Florida last November during demonstrations against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Using a protest curriculum that taught everything from “banner-hanging” to “mass action,” Ruckus members trained 150 members from 40 anti-globalization groups.

## Anti-War Activities

During the past two years the Ruckus Society has turned its talents from fighting “globalization” to opposing war against Saddam Hussein. At October 2002 protests in Washington, D.C. Ruckus members lay inside body-bags to dramatize war casualties.

Last year they also sold decks of cards similar to the ones distributed by U.S. military forces in Iraq depicting “most wanted” members of Saddam's regime. By contrast, the Ruckus deck features photos of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Henry Kissinger, John Ashcroft, Rupert Murdoch and James Baker—“War Profiteers” who use Saddam as a cover for “subjugation, resource extraction, and opening markets: a practice once referred to more honestly as colonialism.”

On April 7, 2003, 150 police confronted anti-war protestors at Oakland, California's port facility. Some hurled rocks and bottles at police, who defended themselves using non-lethal weapons. The *New York Times* called the incident “the most violent be-

tween protesters and authorities anywhere in the country since the start of the war in Iraq.”

Law enforcement agencies took note of Ruckus’ role. On April 2, the California Anti-Terrorism Information Center (CATIC – an agency within California’s Department of Justice) issued a bulletin warning police of the potential for violence at the port on April 7. The bulletin specifically noted that Ruckus had planned a “blockades training course” for April 3. CATIC also pointed out Ruckus’ earlier training at the 1999 Seattle WTO protests and urged police to be aware of the “potential violence” likely.

Ruckus howled. “I think it’s very dangerous,” Sellers told the *Oakland Tribune*. “I have very good reason to believe that law enforcement misconstrues and, in fact, overtly misrepresents what protest organizations are all about. There’s a concerted effort to vilify folks who are working on progressive causes, to make them look as threatening as they can and then have self-fulfilling prophecies of violence in the streets.”

But even some on the left opposed Ruckus tactics. David Harris, the pacifist anti-draft protestor of the Vietnam era and ex-husband of folksinger Joan Baez, criticized direct action. “We need to talk to people and organize them for peace, not disrupt their lives and make them angry,” he told the *Oakland Tribune*. “Delivery guys and commuters are not our enemy...I’m sure a lot of the people who are disrupting things in the city [a reference to anti-war protests in nearby San Francisco] are well-meaning...But it plays like they are a bunch of narcissistic, washed-out leftists. If we are going to build a serious movement, then playing the game like the Ruckus Society did in Seattle will get us nowhere.”

### What Next?

The Ruckus Society, like Sea Shepherd and the Rainforest Action Network, likes to announce its wholehearted opposition to violence and mayhem. But these groups feed public confusion by endorsing violence against private and public property as legitimate non-violent dissent. Sellers may not see “direct action” tactics as true violence, but most Americans – as

well as most law-enforcement agencies – do. It’s unfortunate that the colorful stunts frequently associated with many direct action tactics tend to obscure the seriousness of their lawlessness.

Ruckus has announced that it will not organize protests at the Democratic National Convention in Boston in 2004, but will focus on the Republican Party at its New York City convention and elsewhere. John Sellers told the *Boston Globe*, “I don’t think anybody has any illusions about the Democrats...But anybody’s going to look better in context. Everybody is concerned first and foremost with getting the Bush administration out of office.”

*Neil Hrab is the Warren T. Brookes Fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.*

## Green Watch

Green Watch is a project of Capital Research Center dedicated to monitoring the leadership, activities and funding of the liberal environmentalist movement. It is an on-line database and research apparatus that will help citizens, policymakers and the press find information about environmental policy and activist organizations that seek to use the power of government to achieve their objectives. Green Watch produces timely news reports and analyses that keeps you up-to-date on the latest developments in the environmental policy debate. Currently, CRC monitors and conducts research on over 500 environmental organizations.

You can take an active role in the free market environmental movement by becoming a Green Watch Watchdog. To learn more, visit [www.Green-Watch.com](http://www.Green-Watch.com).

# BrieflyNoted

**AARP** (formerly the **American Association of Retired Persons**) angered its political allies when it endorsed the Republican-backed Medicare bill approved in November. The law's provision for a limited program of competition between Medicare and private plans, beginning in 2010, is apparently more offensive than the prescription drug entitlement it provides 40 million older and disabled Americans. Activists charge this will lead to Medicare privatization. AARP policy director John Rother estimates 3,000 to 4,000 of AARP's 35 million members canceled their memberships. Edward Coyle, executive director of the 3 million member Alliance for Retired Americans (formerly the National Council of Senior Citizens, a labor union affiliate), says, "It's a firestorm out there. I am absolutely convinced that on this issue AARP doesn't speak for their membership." Card burnings were held in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. Julia Kayser, 76, president of the Easthampton, New York AARP chapter, is telling seniors to quit. "A lot of people will not renew their memberships when it comes due," said Kayser.

On January 8, the **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** charged the Bush Administration with systematically misrepresenting Iraq's weapons threat. A report by Carnegie president Jessica Matthews and analysts Joseph Cirincione and George Perkovich concludes that, "It is unlikely that Iraq could have destroyed, hidden or sent out of the country the hundreds of tons of chemicals and biological weapons, dozens of scud missiles... that officials claimed were present without the United States detecting some sign of this activity." The authors also urge the U.S. to change its policy of unilateral preventive war. **Secretary of State Colin Powell** disagreed, saying Iraq had dangerous weapons and may have collaborated with terrorist organizations. "My presentation... made it clear that we had seen some links and connections to terrorist organizations over time," said Powell. "I have not seen a smoking gun, concrete evidence about the connection, but I think the possibility of such connections did exist and it was prudent to consider them at the time that we did." The Carnegie study acknowledges that Iraq's future capability to produce biological weapons could pose a threat to U.S. security.

The **Ford Foundation** announced it is cutting off support to a Palestinian advocacy group due to complaints from several Jewish organizations and members of Congress. Ford said it terminated the remaining two years of a five-year, \$750,000 grant to the Jerusalem-based **Palestinian Society for Protection of Human Rights and the Environment**. The group accuses Israel of practicing apartheid and recommends that Israel face charges in international courts for alleged human rights abuses. A Ford official claimed that the termination had nothing to do with the group's politics but because of concerns about its fiscal management. But the foundation performed an audit of the Society only after the American Jewish Congress and other groups asked for an investigation.

Leftists are fighting each other in a fierce struggle to control the board of **WBAI-FM**, the radio voice of the New York City Left for the past 40 years. WBAI is dedicated to grass-roots activism and freedom from corporate control. It has 32,000 dues-paying members. More than 70 candidates in four factions are running for 24 board seats. One faction charges that black extremists have seized control of WBAI and are subverting its anti-war commitments. The black activist slate accuses them of racism. The dispute comes at a bad time. WBAI's audience has shrunk, fundraising fell \$400,000 short of its \$1.2 million goal, and the station may have to dismiss half of its 37 employees.

